

EDINA PARK BOARD
7:30 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
JANUARY 9, 2001

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tom White, Andrew Herring, Dave Fredlund, George Klus, Floyd Grabiell, Andy Finsness, Scot Housh, Linda Presthus

MEMBERS ABSENT: Karla Sitek, John Murrin, Chuck Mooty

STAFF PRESENT: John Keprios, Ed MacHolda, Janet Canton, Vince Cockriel, Tom Horwath

I. APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 12, 2000 PARK BOARD MINUTES

George Klus MOVED TO APPROVE THE DECEMBER 12, 2000 PARK BOARD MINUTES. Scot Housh SECONDED THE MOTION. MINUTES APPROVED.

II. PARK MAINTENANCE AND FORESTRY PRESENTATIONS - VINCE COCKRIEL, PARK SUPERINTENDENT OF PARK MAINTENANCE & TOM HORWATH, CITY FORESTER.

Mr. Keprios indicated that Vince Cockriel, Park Superintendent is going to give a presentation that outlines the mission and function of the Park Maintenance Department. Tom Horwath, City Forester, will then give a presentation on the Forestry Department year in review.

Mr. Cockriel started out his presentation by reading the Park Department's mission statement. He pointed out that within the park department they have a full-time staff consisting of one park superintendent, one park team leader/foreman, 8 people who are at a step 4 level (to which most of them have many years of park experience not only in Edina but with other cities) and one person at the step 3 level. Mr. Cockriel then explained the step program and noted that the program was instituted so that people would have a chance to move up. It's a career development program based on steps that assume more responsibility and more pay once the employee completes required educational classes and specific additional training. There are 6 attainable steps in the program. With each step there are educational, licensing and certification requirements. Mr. Herring asked if all of the employees are union to which Mr. Cockriel replied everyone is union with the exception of himself and the park foreman. He also pointed out that they do have one park custodian who is also non-union. He stated that the park

custodian is a very busy person in that he has the task of keeping approximately 27 park facilities clean and is probably one of the busiest workers they have. Mr. Cockriel indicated that the park department also has contract and seasonal park maintenance people. He noted that the two contract people are the city forester and the city weed inspector. The city weed inspector usually starts sometime around the first part of May and his task is managing weed control and/or noxious weeds within the City of Edina.

Mr. Cockriel indicated that they have 30 part-time seasonal people that start work during the middle of April and usually stay through the middle of September. The part-time people help with the seasonal type operations such as the ball fields, aquatic center and extra clean-up with regards to litter pick up, etc.

Mr. Cockriel pointed out that they provide turf care for 422 different grass areas that are mowed on a weekly basis and some of them more often than that such as the ballfields during the early summer months.

Mr. Cockriel explained that during the middle of April every year they have a city wide spring clean-up which includes an intense cleaning of 39 parks. He noted that they try to coordinate it with the adopt-a-park program. He indicated that most of the parks have been adopted which relieves a lot of the heavy litter pick-up.

Mr. Cockriel stated that they maintain and repair 27 different buildings throughout the park system that is ongoing. They also maintain 26 tennis courts and basketball courts as well as ten miles of walking and bicycle paths and 23 playground equipment sites. Mr. Cockriel pointed out that the last referendum really helped with the playground sites and with some of the tennis courts, however, there is still work to be done.

Mr. Cockriel indicated that currently they are working on flooding and maintaining the ice rinks. There are 11 outdoor hockey rinks and 12 general skating rinks. He stated that the workers start right after Thanksgiving and continue until the first of March depending on the weather. They work seven days a week with the exception of Christmas Day. Mr. Herring asked how many of the rinks have asphalt underneath to which Mr. Cockriel replied three of them have asphalt; Normandale, Pamela and Lewis Park. Mr. Herring asked if the asphalt extends the life of the ice to which Mr. Cockriel replied it really varies on the type of base we get, how much use there is and what the winter has been like. If there is a good deep base, the black then does have a tendency to draw it out. Due to the typically flat surface, we get less run-off and therefore it re-freezes again and with the use of an ice shaver we can bring it right back. A flat surface is a real advantage.

Mr. Cockriel stated that he also manages the water quality program for the city's lakes, streams and ponds. The program basically is used to knock the algae out of a lot of the ponds. He noted that he works more with the private type ponds and the city water holding ponds. It is more for aesthetic purposes than functional purposes. Mr. Cockriel indicated that he also administers the geese and deer management programs, which are handled in conjunction with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Mr. Klus

asked Mr. Cockriel if there are any other management programs for any other type of wildlife in the city. Mr. Cockriel responded that they work on a complaint basis. On occasion individuals will call in regarding problems they are having with squirrels, beavers, rabbits, etc.

Mr. Cockriel then explained the park maintenance budget for 2001 and then touched on a few things that have happened in the last year. He indicated that this past year the Wooddale comfort station was completed, which was a mission in itself, and turned out to be very successful. He noted that there is just a little bit of touch up work left to do this spring. Also, this year they built a new hockey rink at Weber Park. Every year they try to replace a hockey rink and they are basically on a ten-year turn-around schedule. This year they also worked on a half dozen back stops and benches. Mr. Cockriel noted that he doesn't have any predictions for the coming year because it will depend upon what happens with the city/school referendum.

Ms. Presthus asked if everyone comes in at a the Step 1 level or can people come in at a higher level, because if the referendum goes through we may need more people. Mr. Cockriel replied that if there is a need for a journeyman or carpenter type of thing they do have the authority to hire someone at a higher level. He indicated that they have never had a hard time hiring good, qualified, skilled people because the City of Edina is a great place to work.

Mr. Housh indicated that a lot of the proposed initiative for the referendum is on school property and therefore, some of the maintenance is going to be the school's responsibility. He asked how is that going to work. Mr. Keprios explained that the way the facilities use agreement is written, if it's accepted, all facilities located on school property would be owned, operated and maintained by the school district. All that's on city property would be the city's responsibility and essentially there is very little new additional infrastructure going on city property. Mr. Keprios stated that he thinks the majority of our additional maintenance would be the field attention, there is going to be a heavier fertilization schedule and we will also be adding more irrigation systems. Mr. Cockriel pointed out that maintenance on the new soccer fields would easily quadruple because of their very nature, they take more water, fertilization, top dressing, etc. Mr. Cockriel explained that a field that is made of clay or natural turf can still come back after a drought. However, if you don't keep up with a sand field after it's been renovated it will not come back after a drought. Mr. Keprios noted that another area where we would need more maintenance is if the keyless entry system is approved as proposed it will require a lot more year-round maintenance.

Mr. Keprios pointed out that Edina's Park Maintenance Department workers are very highly skilled, they do not just cut grass and make ice. He indicated that the ice rinks they make are a design of their own and have actually become kind of the envy of the Twin Cities. He noted that he is really proud of the work that they do and it clearly shows that our maintenance staff take a lot of pride in their work.

Tom Horwath, City Forester, indicated that he has served as the City Forester for the past 12 years and has also served with other metro areas in the same position for a total of 22 years of forestry experience. He pointed out that during his 22 years he has spent much of his time controlling the spread of Dutch Elm Disease and Oak Wilt. He indicated that these two major tree diseases he controls in accordance with Minnesota State law and local tree ordinances. Mr. Horwath noted that although it has become a routine over the years he still regards Dutch Elm Disease and Oak Wilt Control as his high priority duty. He stated that he believes if it were not for the city wide sanitation efforts and other successful preservation efforts through the years a person would have to search very hard to find a single elm remaining within the city. He commented that he is sure the population of oaks would be decreased as well. Mr. Horwath pointed out that the entire metropolitan area has in fact been recognized nationally for its outstanding continued efforts on protecting elm trees.

Mr. Horwath explained that compliance to removal orders of infectious trees can be an expensive sacrifice and time consuming task and he applauds the residents of Edina for their swift compliance and their understanding of the importance of this program.

Mr. Horwath commented that perhaps the most rewarding of his tasks is reforestation. The importance of trees is well documented and widely known and it has been said that tree planting time is the most important time we can spend on tree care throughout the life of a tree. It is at this time that our efforts and preparation will either give a tree a good healthy start or lead the tree down a struggling path and perhaps even an untimely demise. Mr. Horwath noted that whether he is planting trees in city parks by himself or directing a planting operation, he always stresses the quality of labor during this important time. Mr. Horwath indicated that he has detailed the number of trees he has been involved with in planting. He has noted both their species and where they have been planted in the parks. He explained that he is currently working with Tim Zimmerman, City Horticulturist, on a program to purchase a wider variety of tree species both native and exotic. He explained that in the past when purchasing trees they have relied on the stock available at the local nurseries. He noted that in his opinion the end result has been an over abundance of usual types of trees. He stated that this will make the parks an even more interesting place to visit and enjoy.

Mr. Horwath pointed out that another pest of recent introduction into the city's forestry management program is buckthorn control, which recently has been added to the Minnesota State Noxious Weed list. He noted that all of the state nurseries have agreed to stop selling all varieties of this tree. He stated that on some selective sites this past year he has removed countless buckthorn shrubs. He noted that Mr. Zimmerman and himself took an area by Arneson Acres and pulled the buckthorn out by the roots and made a woodchip trail and introduced some native woodland flowers and shrubs. He noted that this area was transformed from an uninviting rebel collecting lot to a welcome addition to the parks. He commented that is proof that small steps in this overwhelming path can go a long way. Mr. Horwath stated that currently he is researching and

experimenting on various methods of buckthorn eradication. He explained that this plant will re-sprout profusely if simply cut at ground level making for even worse conditions.

Mr. Horwath explained that during this past fall and winter he has been conducting roadside vegetation inspections and sending trimming notices to residents. He indicated that he is asking residents to comply with city ordinances regarding the necessary trimming or removal of weeds, trunks or trees growing into the streets from along their boulevards for public safety purposes. He noted that ordinarily the city administers a tree trimming program by competitive bid selection of a tree company to trim all boulevard trees which are in need within a selected area of the city. The residents also have the opportunity to do it themselves or select their own company if they wish. Residents are charged on a per diameter basis for the trimmers. Mr. Horwath pointed out that weeds, shrubs and trees on and off the boulevard all need maintenance to keep vegetation from dangerously encroaching into the streets. He commented that to date he has mailed approximately 300 notices to which the compliance are going very well. He noted that in addition to outlying compliance specifications as specifically as possible he also includes up-to-date proper trimming information, encouraging both trimming for public safety and aesthetic purposes.

Mr. Horwath pointed out that he has responded to approximately 1,000 calls from Edina residents. He explained that time permitting he is available for on-sight tree inspections of any species of tree, disease identification and control measures as well as offers general advice to many matters relating to the resident's trees.

Mr. Klus indicated that he has noticed that on some of the middle islands by Highlands there are some trees that are coming to the end of their mature life and asked if there are any thoughts on replacing those trees. Mr. Keprios replied that is something they can take a look at, reforestation on some of those islands. Mr. Cockriel stated that they have tried to encourage neighborhood committees/groups to propose to us what they would like to see done. Some of the neighborhoods have been contributing to some of the maintenance and cost. Mr. Cockriel noted that they try to stay away from anything high maintenance because they don't have the staff to maintain it. Mr. Klus asked Mr. Cockriel if he understands correctly that he would rather have the neighborhood ask to have trees taken out and indicate what they would like to see put in its place. Mr. Cockriel replied that is correct, he would like it to come from the neighborhood.

Mr. Herring asked if there is a buckthorn problem at Bredesen Park to which Mr. Horwath responded he is certain it is all over Bredesen. He commented that buckthorn is pretty much a problem all over the eastern half of the nation.

Ms. Presthus asked if she understands correctly that the city forester will go to a resident's private property and tell them what is wrong with their tree. Mr. Horwath replied that is correct, however, it is on a time-permitting basis. Mr. Housh asked Mr. Horwath if he assesses the homeowners for the cost of his time or is it a service that the

city provides. Mr. Horwath responded there is no cost for the inspections, it continues to be a service the city provides.

III. PARK BOARD ANNUAL CALENDAR AND 7:00 P.M. START TIME

Mr. Keprios indicated that he would like the Park Board meetings to start at 7:00 p.m. instead of 7:30 p.m. He noted that all of the other boards and commissions meet at 7:00 p.m. and stated that he feels now is a good time to address this with new board members starting.

Floyd Grabel MOVED TO APPROVE THE 7:00 P.M. START TIME FOR PARK BOARD MEETINGS. Linda Presthus SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Keprios commented that during the past year all 13 athletic associations have given a presentation to the Park Board. He asked the Park Board how they would feel if all of the presidents attended the same meeting this year to address perhaps some common issues rather than meeting with all 13 associations at different times again. Mr. White indicated that he doesn't know if they could all do a presentation in one night. Mr. Keprios noted that he would meet with the associations ahead of time to determine what topics they would like to have discussed to maximize the Park Board's time. Mr. White agreed that he thinks that would be very productive.

Mr. Keprios indicated that if there are any other suggestions or items that any Park Board member would like to see in the coming year to let him know. Ms. Presthus asked why miniature golf wasn't listed to which Mr. Keprios responded that he took that out because it hasn't been well attended the last few years.

Mr. White stated that he thought having meetings at different sites was a good idea because it let the board members see what is out there. Mr. Keprios indicated that this year there will be a meeting at Braemar Arena. It was then suggested to also have meetings at some of the new comfort stations, Arneson Acres and possibly Edinborough Park. Mr. Keprios indicated that he will suggest some ideas at the next Park Board meeting.

IV. BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE UPDATE AND PRESENTATION

Mr. Keprios explained that the reason he has this on the agenda is he would like some feedback from the Park Board on the power point presentation he will be presenting to the City Council next Tuesday night. He noted he would like to hear some constructive criticism. Mr. Keprios then pointed out that Susie Miller, Adaptive Recreation Supervisor, has been a tremendous help in putting together this power point presentation. At this time Mr. Keprios went through a power point slide presentation on what is being proposed by the Blue Ribbon Committee.

Mr. Herring asked if the City Council wants a recommendation from the Park Board to which Mr. White responded he thought Park Board already gave a recommendation to the City Council. Mr. Keprios stated that he thinks the City Council would like to have the Park Board's input, however, he doesn't think they are looking for anything specific other than comments at this time.

V. OTHER

A. Andy Herring - Mr. Keprios indicated that this is Mr. Herring's last meeting and noted that he will be duly recognized by the City Council at the Board and Commissions meeting for the nine years he has served on the Park Board. Mr. Keprios noted that Chuck Mooty has regrettably resigned from the Park Board. Because of a new position Mr. Mooty is taking he doesn't feel he can give the Park Board the time he would like to.

It was noted that there will be three openings on the Park Board, one of which will probably be a youth member serving a two-year term. The Mayor and Council have not yet taken any formal action on the Park Board's recommendation but it appears as though there is support for the concept.

Mr. Herring pointed out that the program "Connecting With Kids" is looking for someone to work with their steering committee from the Park Board since he is stepping down.

Mr. Herring indicated that he has two things he wants to share. Number one, he has really enjoyed his time on the Park Board, it has absolutely been terrific. He noted that the thing he gets the biggest kick out of is the volunteers. There are so many volunteers in so many different areas and that really gives him a big charge.

He noted that the second thing is staff. He was here during the Bob Kojetin days and he has been here with John Keprios for several years and Edina really has an outstanding staff. Mr. Herring then thanked everyone.

Mr. Klus stated that the Park Board really thanks Andy Herring, Chuck Mooty and Scot Housh for all of their time and efforts that they have put into the Park Board over the years. He noted that they have all learned so much and he would like to recognize these board members and thank them for their time and efforts.

B. Dog Park - Mr. Klus asked if the dog park issue is coming back to the Park Board sometime in the future. Mr. Keprios explained that the City Manager, Chief of Police and himself recently met with staff from St. Louis Park. He noted that collectively they drafted a new memo to the Minneapolis Park Board yesterday with several mandates that must fall into place to put Edina and St. Louis Park at ease with enforcement issues, parking, maintenance, and a hold harmless clause. He indicated that he is doubtful that

the Minneapolis Park Board will be able to meet all the demands. However, the ball is back in their court and we are going to have to wait for a response.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

George Klus MOVED THE ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 9:50 P.M. Tom White SECONDED THE MOTION. MEETING ADJOURNED.